March 30, 2020

Public Notice for Water Quality Certification and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects)

Sonoma Water Mirabel Inflatable Dam Bladder Replacement Project

ECM PIN CW-864410; WDID 1B20009WNSO
Sonoma County

On January 27, 2020, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from Dave Cuneo for Grant Davis of Sonoma Water (applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification (certification) for activities related to the proposed Sonoma Water Mirabel Inflatable Dam Bladder Replacement Project (project).

Project Location

The project is located at 10290 Westside Road in Forestville, at latitude 38.499990°N and longitude 122.885964°W. The proposed project would cause disturbances to the Russian River, within the Lower Russian River hydrologic area (114.11).

Project Description

Dam Replacement
The purpose of the project is to install a replacement fabric bag for Sonoma Water's Mirabel inflatable dam. The existing fabric bag is being replaced because it is at the end of its expected 20-25-year lifespan. The project will involve isolating the work area from the active flow of the Russian River through the use of steel sheet pile installed across the Russian River upstream and downstream of the Mirabel dam. The sheet pile will be installed so as the river flow will all flow through the existing fish ladder structure on the western side of the Mirabel dam. The existing fabric bag will be removed from the concrete base of the dam and the new bag will be installed in its place.

Sediment Removal
Sonoma Water will also remove some nuisance sedimentation near the dam and repair some minor bank erosion on the eastern bank of the Russian River immediately downstream of the Mirabel dam. The growth of a gravel bar downstream of the dam has been identified as causing the river to deposit gravel on the inflatable dam. In 2020 and 2017, gravel had to be removed from the dam prior to inflation of the dam to prevent damage to the dam. Sediment removed from the gravel bar within the channel area is expected to be fully utilized for the bank erosion repair work. Any excess material generated will be stockpiled adjacent to Sonoma Water's service road north of the Wohler Bridge.

Bank Repair
Bank erosion on the eastern bank of the Russian River immediately downstream of the Mirabel dam occurred as a result of a tree or several trees falling into the Russian River

during recent high flow winter storm events. The eroded area is approximately 60-feet in length. Existing willow saplings that are growing at the toe of the slope failure will be kept in place as feasible. Vegetation removed related to access within the isolated work area for the bag replacement maintenance work will be salvaged and utilized to replant the erosion repair area. Salvaged torrent sedge clumps will be placed at the edge of the low flow waterline (downslope of the existing willow saplings that are growing at the toe of the slope failure area. Additional plantings will be installed as necessary to revegetate the eroded bank area. Salvaged small wood will be placed in the water at the edge of the repair area to provide a temporal replacement of in-stream wood structure in the area.

Salvaged torrent sedge material will be replanted at the toe of the repaired slope, estimated to be installed at 2-foot on center spacing. Willow cuttings will be installed directly behind the torrent sedge and along the lower bank repair slope. The willows in at the toe of the slope will be installed at a 2-foot on center spacing. Willows higher on the slope will be installed at a 5-foot on center spacing. The upper bank area will have other herbaceous riparian plants typical to the area (Santa Barbara sedge, wild rose, mugwort, etc.), planted at a 5-foot on center spacing. The plantings would be installed during construction by the construction contractor and irrigated while the construction contractor is onsite. The bank repair expectation is that the bank is stabilized (no expansion of erosion area) and has an 85% survival rate of installed plants after 5 years.

Denil Fish Ladder Decommissioning
Maintenance work at the Mirabel Dam may also include the decommissioning of the existing east side (river left) Denil fish ladder (permission to decommission the fish ladder is pending approval from National Marine Fisheries Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife). Decommissioning could consist of pulling the metal baffles out of the ladder and then filling in the ladder channel with gravel and adding steel plates across the entire ladder to seal off flow and fish access to the ladder.

Site Access and Staging
Primary site access will be from Sonoma Water's access road beginning at the Wohler Bridge and running along the east side of the Russian River approximately 2,500 feet down to the Mirabel Dam. The Mirabel Dam is also accessed from the west side of the Russian River through Sonoma Water's Mirabel facilities access from Westside Road. Construction activity access will primarily be from the east side. However, some activities and access will occur from the west side, such as the installation and operation of the dewatering system for the project, which will be pumping dewatering water to Sonoma Water's existing settling ponds west of the Russian River.

A staging area east of the Mirabel Dam has been designated for use by the construction contractor. The primary purpose of this staging area is for transport and delivery of the bag material to the site. A crane at this staging area will move the bag material down to the dam site where additional equipment working within the sheet pile isolated work area will move the bag material into position. The staging area will be protected using

erosion control BMPs (seeding, mulching, wattles around the perimeter) at the completion of construction.

Work Area Isolation and Dewatering
Steel sheet pile will be used to isolate the work area and all river flow will be directed through the existing fish ladder structure on the western side of the Mirabel dam. Downstream flows and aquatic passage will be maintained through the entire work period. Vehicles will not be allowed to operate in the active flowing water of the Russian River. The contractor will be required to utilize methods such as crane mats as necessary to keep equipment tracks out of the active flow of the Russian River while the sheet pile is being installed. Once isolated, the site will be dewatered by pumping the water out of the area isolated by the sheet pile. Dewatering water will be pumped to Sonoma Water's existing settling pond west of the Russian River. Sonoma Water staff will provide fish rescue for the work area during the site isolation process.

Construction Timing

The project is expected to occur between June 15 and October 15, 2020.

Impacts

Temporary impacts total 0.45 acre including 0.21 acre of dewatering above the dam and 0.24 acre of dewatering below the dam. Permanent impacts total 0.35 acre including 0.08 acre for the footprint of the dam, 0.15 acre of sediment removal area, and 0.12 acre of bank repair area.

Mitigation for Project Impacts

Repair and revegetation of the bank erosion area will be performed as mitigation for the permanent impacts associated with sediment removal in-stream.

Other Agency Permits

The applicant has applied to the United States Army Corps of Engineers for Nationwide Permit 3 *Maintenance* and Nationwide Permit 13 *Bank Stabilization*, pursuant to section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The applicant has also submitted a section 1600 Notification of Lake or Streambed Alteration to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

CEQA

The North Coast Regional Water Board, has determined that the following California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Categorical exemptions apply, 15301: Existing Facilities and 15304: Minor Alterations to Land, and will file a Notice of Exemption with the State Clearinghouse concurrent with issuance of the 401 Water Quality Certification, pursuant to CEQA guidelines.

Public Comments

Regional Water Board staff are proposing to regulate this project pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1341) and/or Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control

Act authority. In addition, staff will consider all phone calls and comments submitted in writing and received within a 21-day comment period that begins on the first date of issuance of this notice and ends at 5:00 p.m. on the last day of the comment period. If you have any questions or comments, please contact staff member Kaete King at (707) 576-2848 or Kaete.King@waterboards.ca.gov within 21 days of the posting of this notice.

The information contained in this public notice is only a summary of the applicant's proposed activities. The Regional Water Board's project file includes the application for certification and additional details of the proposed project, including maps and design drawings. Project documents and any comments received are on file and may be reviewed or copied at the Regional Water Board office, 5550 Skylane Boulevard, Suite A, Santa Rosa, California. Appointments are recommended for document review. Appointments can be made by calling (707) 576-2220.

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